

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-03
IGA-02 EB-08 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 /057 W
-----261503Z 124343 /53
R 261236Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3804
INFO USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 1903

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR LE US
SUBJ: MILITARY ASSISTANCE FOR LEBANESE ARMY

REF: STATE 081973

1. SUMMARY: AMBASSADOR RECOMMENDS THAT WE FOCUS NOW ON QUESTION OF WHAT WE ARE PREPARED TO DO IN TERMS OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO LEBANON. HE SUGGESTS CRITERIA FOR DECIDING WHEN WE WILL SUPPLY EQUIPMENT AND SUGGESTS INITIAL GOAL OF EQUIPPING THREE BATTALIONS WITH \$10 MILLION WORTH OF EQUIPMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. REFTTEL RAISES IMPORTANT AND FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION OF USG ATTITUDE TOWARDS HELPING LEBANESE ARMY. WE ARE SENDING SEPARATELY DATT'S DETAILED VIEWS BASED ON CONVERSATIONS WITH BRIGADIER KHOURY AND OTHER OFFICERS OF LEBANESE ARMY. IN LIGHT THOSE CONVERSATIONS I RECOMMEND THAT WE PROCEED WITH TRANSFER OF COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT IN FMS CASE UIE RPT UIE SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS DESCRIBED BELOW. AT SAME TIME I FEEL THAT WE ALSO NEED TAKE BROADER LOOK AT ENTIRE QUESTION. FOLLOWING IS ATTEMPT TO START THAT PROCESS AND COMES WITHIN FRAMEWORK SERIES OF TELEGRAMS I AM PLANNING SEND DEPARTMENT
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FOR DISCUSSION DURING MY CONSULTATION.

3. IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT USG POLICY HAS BEEN THAT WE WOULD RESUME FMS TRANSACTIONS WITH LEBANON ONCE THERE WAS A UNIFIED LEBANESE ARMY TO RECEIVE EQUIPMENT AND USE IT. IT HAS ALSO BEEN MY UNDERSTANDING THAT, GIVEN OUR DESIRE TO PROMOTE STABILITY AND

SUPPORT GOVERNMENT OF PRESIDENT SARKIS, WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO CONSIDER GRANT MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO LEBANESE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT, AGAIN PROVIDED THAT THERE WAS UNIFIED ARMY TO RECEIVE AND ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR EQUIPMENT. AT THIS POINT WE CANNOT HONESTLY SAY THERE IS A UNIFIED LEBANESE ARMY. THERE IS A NUCLEUS BEING FORMED AT LEBANESE ARMY HEADQUARTERS UNDER GENERAL KHOURY WHICH WILL, WE HOPE, LEAD TO FORMATION OF A UNIFIED FORCE LOYAL TO PRESIDENT SARKIS. WE HESITATE TO PREDICT HOW LONG IT WILL TAKE TO HAVE SUCH A FORCE, BUT THREE MONTHS WOULD SEEM TO BE THE MINIMUM PERIOD DURING WHICH THAT COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED, AND SIX MONTHS IS A MORE LIKELY FIGURE FOR CREATION OF A FORCE OF ANY SIZE.

4. GIVEN TIME REQUIRED TO GENERATE AN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND GIVEN PRESENT STATE OF LEBANESE ARMY FORCES, WE BELIEVE THAT NOW IS THE TIME TO START FORMULATING A DECISION AS TO WHAT WE WILL BE PREPARED TO PROVIDE. WE THINK GENERAL KHOURY IS COMPETENT AND SERIOUS AND WE BELIEVE HIS OBJECTIVES AND REQUIREMENTS WILL BE REALISTIC. WE HOPE TO HAVE FURTHER DISCUSSION WITH HIM IN COMING WEEKS IN ORDER TO HAVE THE DETAILS OF WHAT HE THINKS THE ARMY REQUIRES. WE SUGGEST THAT WE TAKE AS A CRITERION FOR THE DELIVERY OF NON-LETHAL WEAPONS, SUCH AS THE COMMUNICATIONS ITEMS IN FMS CASE UIE, THE FOLLOWING: (A) A REQUEST FROM GENERAL KHOURY AND/OR MINISTER OF DEFENSE BOUTROS, (B) DESIGNATION OF UNITS WHICH ARE TO CONFIDENTIAL

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RECEIVE THE EQUIPMENT, AND (C) ASSURANCES FROM GENERAL KHOURY THAT THIS EQUIPMENT WILL BE USED BY UNIFIED FORCES UNDER HIS CONTROL.

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ACTION NEA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 1903

5. FOR LETHAL EQUIPMENT, WHICH WE ASSUME WILL IN THE FIRST INSTANCE BE CONFINED TO LIGHT ARMS AND REPAIR PARTS FOR THEIR EXISTING STOCKS OF HEAVY WEAPONS, WE SHOULD ADD TO THE ABOVE CRITERION THE ACTUAL EXISTENCE OF A MILITARY UNIT UNDER KHOURY'S COMMAND, SUCH AS THE FIRST BATTALION DESCRIBED IN PARALLEL MESSAGE PREPARED BY THE DATT. WE SUGGEST THAT WE THINK IN TERMS INITIALLY OF EQUIPPING THREE BATTALIONS OF INFANTRY TO A VALUE OF \$10 MILLION IN GRANT ASSISTANCE. LIGHT ARMS ENVISIONS RIFLES, JEEP-MOUNTED ANTI-TANK WEAPONS, MACHINE GUNS, SHOULDER-FIRED GRENADES, ETC., IN SHORT, ANYTHING WHICH WOULD NORMALLY BE FOUND IN AN INFANTRY UNIT WITH WHICH TO PROVIDE AN OFFENSIVE CAPABILITY AGAINST A LIKE UNIT OR A DEFENSIVE CAPABILITY AGAINST A HEAVIER UNIT, SUCH AS TANKS FOR EXAMPLE.

6. WE TAKE IT AS UNDERSTOOD THAT WE DO NOT WANT TO GET INTO THE BUSINESS OF SUPPLYING SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT TO THE LEBANESE. NEVERTHELESS, GIVEN THE ARMS HELD BY CHRISTIAN AND PALESTINIAN EXTREMISTS AND GIVEN THE ARMS WE ARE SUPPLYING OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE AREA, WE ARE NOT SURE WE UNDERSTAND THE APPARENT HESITANCY TO SUPPLY LETHAL EQUIPMENT IMPLIED BY PARA FOUR OF REFTEL. EVERYBODY AND HIS CONFIDENTIAL

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BROTHER IN THIS COUNTRY HAS SOME SORT OF LETHAL WEAPON. EVERYBODY, THAT IS, EXCEPT THE FORCES OF ORDER. OUR PROBLEM WILL BE TO HELP THOSE FORCES TO OBTAIN A PARITY IN FIRE POWER WITH THE FORCES OF DISORDER.

7. THE ABOVE IS WRITTEN IN SOMETHING OF A VACUUM BECAUSE I DO NOT HAVE A CLEAR IDEA WHAT WASHINGTON MIGHT BE PREPARED TO DO FOR LEBANON WITH RESPECT TO ARMS ACQUISITION. IT NEVERTHELESS SEEMS TO ME URGENT THAT WE BEGIN NOW TO DECIDE HOW MUCH WE WILL GIVE OR SELL TO THE LEBANESE. IT ALSO SEEMS TO ME THAT THE POINT OF DEPARTURE FOR OUR STUDY SHOULD BE WHAT GENERAL KHOURY FEELS ARE HIS REQUIREMENTS. PARKER

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